awesome potential of her vocation: ''I touch the future,'' she said. ''I teach.'' While we may bring to the debate on education differing views, it is my hope that we ultimately remember this is a profoundly important issue which should be above politics and ideology. It is all about the future of this country—and the future, after all, is in very small hands.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor to speak about the importance of reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act before September 30. Since enactment of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994, the number of forcible rapes of women have declined, and the number of sexual assaults nationwide have gone down as well.

Despite the success of the Violence Against Women, Act, domestic abuse and violence against women continue to plague our communities. Consider the fact that a woman is raped every five minutes in this country, and that nearly one in every three adult women experiences at least one physical assault by a partner during adulthood. In fact, more women are injured by domestic violence each year than by automobile accidents and cancer deaths combined.

In South Dakota alone, approximately 15,000 victims of domestic violence were provided assistance last year. Shelters, victims' service providers, and counseling centers in my state rely heavily on VAWA funds to provide assistance to these women and children. VAWA reauthorization assures that states and communities will continue to have access to critical funds for domestic violence services. We must not allow this opportunity to pass us by.

As you know, legislation to reauthorize VAWA has received broad, bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. I am pleased to join 68 of my Senate colleagues in cosponsoring VAWA legislation that unanimously passed the Senate Judiciary Committee in June. Similar legislation in the House has 233 bipartisan cosponsors and was also approved in June by the House Judiciary Committee.

Since the Violence Against Women Act became law, South Dakota organizations have received over $6.7 million in federal funding for domestic abuse programs. In addition, the Violence Against Women Act doubled prison time for repeat sex offenders; established mandatory restitution to victims of violence against women; codified much of our existing laws on rape; and strengthened interstate enforcement of violent crimes against women.

The law also created a national toll-free hotline to provide women with crisis intervention help, information about violence against women, and free referrals to local services. Last year, the hotline took its 300,000th call. The number for women to call for help is: 1–800–799–SAFE.

In addition to reauthorizing the provisions of the original Violence Against Women Act, the legislation that I am supporting would improve our overall efforts to reduce violence against women by strengthening law enforcement's role in reducing violence against women. The legislation also expands legal services and assistance to victims of violence, while also addressing the effects of domestic violence on children. Finally, programs are funded to strengthen education and training to combat violence against women.

A woman from South Dakota recently wrote me about this issue, and I'd like to share her story with you because I believe it makes the most compelling case for reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

The letter begins:

My story is that I was abused as a child, raped as a teenager, and emotionally abused as a wife. I survived that, but I almost didn't emotionally survive the last two and a half years knowing that my grandchildren were being abused and having my hands tied to be patient while our laws worked. My son has been fighting for custody of his triplets.

The letter continues:

Their story is horrible. While in the custody of their mother and her live-in boyfriend, they were battered, bruised, emotionally and sexually assaulted.

She writes that one of her grandchildren got her ear cut off, another had his head split open, and the third child's throat was slit.

Thankfully, the woman writes that her son finally got custody of her grandchildren and removed them from the abusive environment.

The letter concludes:

This is my story, and at least it has a happy ending, but there are hundreds of women and children out there still living in danger. Please reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. Don't let another woman go through what I went through, and please don't let another child go through what my grandchildren have gone through. You can make a difference.

Simply stated, reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act will provide much needed resources to prevent domestic violence in our country. I appreciate that we have many worthwhile legislative priorities remaining to be decided, including a majority of appropriations bills that must be passed this year. However, I can think of no better accomplishment for Congress than to reauthorize VAWA and help keep wives, daughters, sisters, and friends from becoming victims of domestic violence.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. Am I recognized in morning business under a previous order?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

THE REMAINING BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, we are nearing the end of the session of the 106th Congress. I believe we have 13 appropriations bills that we are required to enact and required to be signed into law to provide funding for all of the various things that are done in public policy and by our agencies of Government.

Out of the 13 appropriations bills, 2 of them have been signed into law by President Clinton. Now this process is broken. It is quite clear. We have come to the end stage of this session. Most of the appropriations bills are not yet completed. Most of the very difficult and complex issues are as of yet unresolved. I say to my colleagues that all we have to do to resolve all of this is to vote—only vote.

I will give you an example of why this process is broken. I serve on the agriculture appropriations subcommittee. We passed a bill in July that appropriates money for agricultural functions. Now, the Senate passed its bill in mid to late July. The House passed its bill on July 11. I am a conferee in a conference between the House and Senate. There has never been a conference. We have never met. There have been no discussions, and no Senator or Congressman has been involved in any way to try to move this legislation forward. Why? I am not sure exactly the reason why. I suspect the reason why is that this issue—this Agriculture appropriations bill—has some very complicated and controversial matters involved in it and some don't want to vote on them. So if you don't want to vote, don't call them up, don't have a conference. Just dig in your heels and stall. That is what happened.

One of the controversial issues on that bill—and it is appropriate that it should be on that bill—is the question of whether this country should allow the sale of food to certain countries with whom we have economic sanctions. Our country has had a policy, believe it or not, of saying we will use food as a weapon.

We don't like Saddam Hussein, so we impose economic sanctions against him and his country. We impose economic sanctions against the country of Iraq. We impose sanctions against Iran. We impose sanctions against Libya, North Korea, and Cuba. Included in those economic sanctions are provisions that say we will not allow the shipment of food or medicine to your country. That doesn't make any sense to me. We ought never use food as a weapon. We ought never under any condition say that we will prevent the shipment of food to anywhere in the world. This is a policy that takes aim at dictators whom we don't like, and it ends up hitting sick, hungry, and poor people. That makes no sense.

So the Senate passed my amendment that is now in conference. The amendment says let us stop using food as a weapon; no more sanctions on food